

Wednesday, March 15, 2023
Education Committee - Public Hearing
Testimony of Daniel Pearson, Executive Director of Educators for Excellence
H.B. No. 6879

Chairs McCrory and Currey, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Daniel Pearson and I am the Executive Director for Educators for Excellence, a teacher-led nonprofit with nearly 1,000 members statewide that seeks to promote student equity and elevate teachers' voices in policy decisions. Today I submit testimony on behalf of our members who are current classroom teachers and educators who are dedicated to their students and profession. Our teachers are calling upon the state to build on recent efforts and put processes in place to help increase teacher diversity and modernize the teaching certification process.

Without teacher diversity, we are doing a disservice to all of our students. Black and brown students need teachers who mirror them; while other students need teachers who can help expose them to different cultures and experiences. Despite the efforts of many fantastic educators of color who prioritize diverse perspectives and cultural inclusion in their lesson plans, we need to be doing more.

Students who do not see themselves in their educators are less likely to succeed academically, less likely to connect with their educators and also less likely to see teaching as a viable career path for themselves, feeding into a cycle that continues to underserve students of color. But for the students and individuals who do see teaching as a viable career path, we continue to make the certification process increasingly difficult.

The current teacher certification process in Connecticut is unnecessarily cumbersome, and costs prospective teachers a lot of time and money, without taking into account their previous experience, and the hours some of them have already put in as support staff inside of the classroom. Our districts are full of fantastic paraprofessionals, substitute teachers, and other support staff who could make wonderful teachers, but are deterred by the harsh and costly process they must navigate to become certified classroom teachers.

Connecticut poses many barriers to the teacher certification process—primarily money and time—just to name a few. These obstacles highly affect individuals who want to become teachers or who want to be working with students in the classroom. If we can break down these barriers, we can help more individuals who want a career teaching in the classroom, therefore reducing the teaching shortage and increasing diversity throughout the profession. It is long overdue that we overhaul our system and modernize the process.

While H.B. 6879 calls for a commission to be formed to help modernize the teaching profession, it is vital that members of the commission are representative of the teaching certification process and the teaching profession. This includes those involved in prep programs, those actively teaching, and strong research facilitation attributes like CPRL. CPRL spoke to over 150 educators for a recent study to explore how we can build a more diverse and effective educator workforce. Their key findings indicate that the current certification process poses barriers to diversifying the education workforce, which in turn, inhibits student learning and worsening inequities. However, the educators who were interviewed have a clear vision for how to change this, and need to be included in upcoming decision making.

We have learned so much over the past 20 years. These barriers have kept high quality teachers on the outside of the profession, and we have done nothing to change it. We are in a teaching crisis, we need more teachers in our classrooms. Now is not the time to remain stagnant. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to make a change.

Our students throughout Connecticut all deserve education equity, and that cannot begin if our students—especially those in high needs districts—are forced into overcrowded classrooms, are missing out on individualized attention, or are excluded from additional expertise and perspectives that can be provided by more teachers. There is a way to begin to solve this problem, and that is by increasing accessibility to the teacher certification process.

Pass H.B. 6879 and increase the possibilities for our students and future educators.

Thank you for your time,

Daniel Pearson
Executive Director
Educators For Excellence - Connecticut (E4E-CT)

About E4E

Founded by public school teachers, Educators for Excellence is a growing movement of more than 33,000 educators nationwide, united around a common set of values and principles for improving student learning and elevating the teaching profession. We work together to identify issues that impact our schools, create solutions to these challenges, and advocate for policies and programs that give all students access to a quality education.

For more information, please visit e4e.org.